

# Contractors as Military Professionals?

GARY SCHAUB, JR., and VOLKER FRANKE

As of 2008, nearly 200,000 private contractors supported or supplemented military operations in Iraq, with about 30,000 of them providing security services. Today, civilian contractors working for the Pentagon outnumber uniformed forces in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> Doug Brooks, president of the International Peace Operations Association, the private security industry's trade organization, suggests that the booming private security industry is here to stay.<sup>2</sup>

Nations have employed civilian contractors to fulfill combat and combat support functions throughout history. But alarming to many observers is the rapid rise of a largely un- (or under-) controlled industry: from less than 15 percent of contractors among the Department of Defense's workforce during World War II to more than 60 percent currently in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> Security contractors often work side-by-side with soldiers and sometimes take on roles traditionally performed by the military. Is the use of contractors compatible with the strong and pervasive professional military ethos? What are the motivations, values, and attitudes of individuals who sign on with private security firms? Do they share norms, behavioral codes, and a professional identity? How do contractors view their professional status and relationship with traditional military forces? How do military members view contractors?

Using survey methodology, we explore some of these questions. Specifically, we compare the attitudes of US military officers to those of security contractors with law-enforcement backgrounds who had completed at least one overseas deployment with a security firm and examine how the two groups view each other, their roles, and professional status.

We frame our analysis with a discussion of military professionalism in the United States and the extent to which employees of the private security industry possess similar traits. Next, we present and compare the results of our research using samples of officers and contractors. Finally, we con-

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clude with a discussion of implications for the relationship between military professionals and security contractors in peace and stability operations.

### *The Military Profession and Civilian Contractors*

What is a military professional? Are all members of the military professionals? Are civilians who perform military duties professionals? Do they regard themselves as professionals? Are they regarded as such by officers? This section delineates the traits of the military profession and assesses the degree to which civilian contractors possess these traits.

Five decades ago, Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz argued that military officers are professionals in the art of war and the management of violence.<sup>4</sup> Officers' area of expertise is in the planning, organizing, and employment of military force. Huntington divided these tasks into two subfields: combat and command, and proficiency in "technical support (administration, comptroller, supply) and professional support (legal, religious, medical)."<sup>5</sup> For Huntington, officers who mastered the technical or professional support area of military activity were not members of the military profession because their expertise was split between the management of violence and technical or job-related knowledge, the latter of which was not unique to the military.<sup>6</sup>

Traditionally, it is in the technical and support categories where the employment of civilian contractors has been most prevalent. But contract employees have also penetrated into the realm of combat and command. In 2008, an estimated 30,000 contractors provided security services in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> Of these, approximately three-quarters were armed, presenting the second largest armed force in Iraq, behind only the US military.<sup>8</sup> At present, between 10,000 and 13,000 private security operatives are working on contracts for the Department of Defense or Department of State, constituting approximately five percent of all US-funded contractor personnel.<sup>9</sup>

The military's broad array of expert knowledge is organized to maximize its usefulness in tackling problems within the security arena, which is in flux at the margins as the profession expands its ambit and fends off or

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accedes to jurisdictional challenges from other groups, including the private sector.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, professional military expertise still is predominant in resolving security challenges through the threat and application of organized, state-sanctioned violence at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Typically, in stable democratic societies, the military provides protection against external threats. Internal security is provided largely by paramilitary law enforcement groups. In post-conflict or transitional nations, however, militaries are often called upon to provide security, combat terrorism and insurgencies, and support the international community's peace and stabilization efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Civilian companies also perform a wide variety of functions related to the threat or application of organized, state-sponsored force to resolve political challenges; and they are organized to effectively do so. By adopting a corporate business model, these firms are able to recruit and retain former military personnel, develop organizational frameworks within which procedures, doctrine, and innovation can be produced, and, as a result, offer an array of capabilities that cover the gamut of military services beyond mere tactical support.<sup>12</sup> P. W. Singer distinguishes among three types of security businesses: military provider firms, military consultant firms, and military support firms that provide combat, training and advising, and technical support respectively.<sup>13</sup> A recent study by Volker Franke and Marc von Boemcken fine-tunes this distinction, offering a five-category typology of armed operational combat support, armed security services, unarmed operational combat support, military- or security-related advice and training, and military support services.<sup>14</sup>

Membership in the military profession traditionally has been limited to the uniformed personnel employed by the state. Although there is some debate regarding whether all military personnel are military professionals—be they officers, noncommissioned officers, career enlisted members, conscripts, reservists of any rank, or national guardsmen—there is a consensus that persons who utilize or manage violence as employees of private entities are not members of the military profession.<sup>15</sup>

When contracted to work for government agencies, the employees of private security firms lay claim to be agents of the state, albeit indirect ones. According to a recent report by the Congressional Research Service, “Conduct that violates international obligations is attributable to a State if it is committed by the government of the State or any of its political subdivisions, or by any official, employee, or agent operating within the scope of authority of any of these governments, or under color of such authority.”<sup>16</sup> Former Blackwater President Erik Prince suggests such color existed for his firm: “From the beginning, these individuals [Blackwa-

ter employees] have been bound by detailed contracts that ensure intensive government direction and control. The US government sets comprehensive standards for the selection and training of security guards. Blackwater's competitively awarded contract contains dozens of pages detailing requirements for each position and specifying hour-by-hour training for each individual."<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the revenue of these firms comes primarily from government sources. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that direct US government spending on private security services in international locales was \$6 billion to \$10 billion over the 2003-2007 period with \$3 billion to \$4 billion spent in Iraq. Such expenditures rival the defense budgets of many nations.<sup>18</sup>

Another key aspect of the military profession is its vocational nature; its members are not primarily motivated by material rewards. Huntington argued that:

The officer is not a mercenary who transfers his services wherever they are best rewarded . . . . Clearly he does not act primarily from economic incentives. In western society the vocation of officership is not well rewarded monetarily. Nor is his behavior within his profession governed by economic rewards and punishments . . . . The motivations of the officer are a technical love for his craft and the sense of social obligation to utilize this craft for the benefit of society.<sup>19</sup>

Charles Moskos suggested that vocations motivated by economic rewards are occupations rather than professions.<sup>20</sup> Military professionals receive compensation that is a function of pay grade, much of which is deferred or in the form of subsidies rather than cash for service.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, by this standard, mercenaries "who fight for employers other than their home state's government [and whose] motivation for fighting is economic gain" fall outside of the military profession.<sup>22</sup> Many have argued that the prospect of extraordinary monetary gain serves as a central motivator for individuals to sign on with private security firms and engage in what we term in this context the "securitized management of violence."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, private security firms pay considerably higher wages than the military at the comparable skill level and grade.<sup>24</sup>

In modern democracies, the military profession derives legitimacy from its license to implement the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force in combination with its subordination to civilian command and control. For Huntington, submission of the military to civil authority is the *sine qua non* of military professionalism. Civilian professionals, by contrast, gain legitimacy through commitment to their employer's or client's interests.<sup>25</sup> As employees of private firms, security contractors at best have

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divided loyalties, answering as they do to their employer for their performance rather than directly to their client.<sup>26</sup>

Because the military works exclusively for the state, “the commitment of the professional to the client is thus changed to ‘loyalty to the nation and its value-system.’”<sup>27</sup> In democracies, “society insists that the management of violence be utilized only for socially approved purposes.”<sup>28</sup> Because private security firms need not answer directly to the polity for their performance, only their shareholders and management, there are few guarantees that they will utilize violence only for the purposes and in the ways that would be socially sanctioned by the citizenry. This lack of accountability has been perhaps the key source of unease about the behavior of private security firms in Iraq and Afghanistan, particularly when incidents that involve significant harm to noncombatants come to light.

But it is not only this exclusivity arrangement based on democratic norms and values that brings legitimacy to the profession of arms. There is also a utilitarian calculus derived from political effectiveness and economic efficiency that legitimizes the military as a unique social institution. Traditionally, a standing military has been viewed as the most efficient and effective solution to national security threats and challenges. This view has been, perhaps, the primary driver of acceptance of militaries throughout history, accounting (in the American case) for the high esteem in which military men were held after the Second World War and Operation Desert Storm and the low esteem in which they were held during and following the Vietnam War.<sup>29</sup> In other words, effectively performing its primary mission constitutes the “special social responsibility” from which the military profession derives its legitimacy.

Security contractors also gain legitimacy by being politically effective and economically efficient. Singer argues that the opaqueness of their relationship with political authorities can increase their political utility by providing services that states would rather hold at arm’s length or hide from public view.<sup>30</sup> Contractors also gain legitimacy from their supposed cost effectiveness. Indeed, the claim that private-sector actors are more efficient and effective than those employed by the public sector has been the primary means of legitimating the privatization movement.

Finally, members of the military profession share a corporate identity honed by their common experiences in training, education, and practice,

as well as a command structure that controls entry into the profession, establishes policies and standards of competence, and prohibits members from practicing outside of its legitimate ambit. As Sir John Hackett wrote, "The essential basis of the military life is the ordered application of force under unlimited liability. It is the unlimited liability which sets the man who embraces this life somewhat apart. He will be (or should be) always a citizen. So long as he serves he will never be a civilian."<sup>31</sup> Military members' behavior is regulated by the *Uniform Code of Military Justice* every moment that they are on active duty and even after they retire from active duty (so long as they do not resign their commission and elect to accept retirement pay). Thus, the profession continues to shape its members' attitudes and conduct throughout their lifetime, thereby reinforcing its corporate identity.

A case could be made that civilian employees of private security firms also share an identity with the military. Many employees are former members of the military (136 respondents or 61.5 percent in our sample), and some are retirees who retain their commission and theoretically could be recalled to active duty. They may belong to the private associations of their former service and feel a kinship to their active-duty colleagues. Apart from this military kinship, some firms quite carefully recruit, train, and even indoctrinate their employees to inculcate a professional identity. On the other hand, there is a *prima facie* case to be made that employees of the security industry do not and likely cannot share a corporate culture given the diversity of firms, clients, and the eligible labor pool. "It is estimated that some 50 private security contractors employing more than 30,000 employees are working in Iraq for an array of clients, including governments, private industry, and international organizations such as the United Nations."<sup>32</sup> There are a multitude of private security firms. Many are characterized by a cadre structure with a relatively low number of full-time employees and a reservoir of expertise that can be called upon on a contract basis. Such a structure would appear to undermine any attempt to indoctrinate these employees or to foster a professional, corporate identity. Franke and Boemcken argue that the nature of the tasks to be performed encourages small-group cohesion but not necessarily the development of a distinct professional identity. Instead, contractors of similar background tend to cluster together, such as those with law-enforcement or special-operation experience, and are wary about interacting with people from other career fields.<sup>33</sup> Unlike the military, there is no enforced conformity in all aspects of life for civilian contractors over an extended period of time that could forge a common identity.

Civilian contractors have many of the traits of military professionals; they possess expert knowledge to manage organized violence, apply it



within the military's jurisdiction, are primarily agents of the state although not directly employed by it, and gain legitimacy through provision of effective solutions to their client's problems. On the other hand, they are not uniformed agents of the state, are motivated by compensation rather than social obligation, and have divided loyalties and a questionable corporate identity. Despite these obstacles, is there an emerging professional self-conception among security contractors? How do contractors view their professional status and relationship with traditional military forces? How do military professionals view contractors? We address these questions in the next section.

### *Analysis and Findings*

The growing complexity of contemporary peace and stability operations that sparked the rise of the private security industry has challenged the military to expand its task portfolio and points out the need for increased cooperation between military and civilian actors in post-conflict settings. These developments necessitate detailed analyses of the impact of the many new actors on mission effectiveness and the accomplishment of mission objectives. An examination also is worthwhile of the relationship among those actors and of their motivations and perceptions of one another. To improve understanding of the dynamics generated by the arrival of this multitude of new actors, we explore and compare the attitudes of military officers to those of security contractors and examine how they view each other, their roles, and professional status. This section presents the results of empirical research conducted at the Air University and among members of an association of police officers who have experience in post-conflict environments as employees of private security firms.

#### *The Officer Sample*

Military officers have been the focus of expansive research in the field of civil-military relations since World War II. Attendance in a resident professional military education (PME) program has proven to be a reliable institutional indicator of an officer's potential for advancement into the ranks of the elite.<sup>34</sup> In August and September 2008, we surveyed US officers attending intermediate, advanced, and senior PME programs in residence at the Air Command and Staff College, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, and Air War College.<sup>35</sup> In all, we analyzed the views of 160 officers (sums may differ from 160 due to nonresponses on some questions).<sup>36</sup> Respondents included 135 men and 13 women; one captain, 70 majors or lieutenant commanders, 56 lieutenant colonels or command-



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ers, and 21 colonels or Navy captains. Components represented were 142 active-duty members, seven reservists, and seven national guardsmen. Most respondents (111) had been in combat, and 30 had not. Breakdown by service was 126 Air Force officers, 17 Army, 12 Navy, and two Marine Corps.

*The CivPol Sample*

Because of contractual prohibitions, we were not able to survey contractors currently deployed in stability operations. The CivPol Alumni Association, a nonprofit group founded in 2007 to “promote the accomplishments of American police officers serving in post-conflict environments throughout the world,” agreed to solicit volunteers from among its members to complete the Security Contractor Survey.<sup>37</sup> Active members of the association are typically American police officers who have completed at least one tour of duty on contract in a conflict region. Usually, these police officers receive a leave of absence from their regular jobs and are recruited by the Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to participate in international civilian police activities and local police development programs around the world.

All 1,400 active members received an e-mail from the association president with a request to complete the Internet-based Security Contractor Survey at their convenience. This approach ensured respondent anonymity. Between March and May of 2009, 355 CivPol Alumni Association members responded to at least part of the survey.<sup>38</sup> In all, 223 respondents answered every question on the survey and were included in our response sample.

All respondents in the CivPol sample were US citizens with a law-enforcement background. The vast majority were male (216 or 96.9 percent), white (77.5 percent), and married (77.1 percent). All respondents had completed at least high school (34.5 percent), almost half (49.8 percent) held undergraduate degrees, and 15.7 percent had graduate degrees. Almost two-thirds (136 or 61.5 percent) had served in the military, and four-fifths of those (108) had been directly involved in combat. Of the respondents with a military background, almost all had served as enlisted personnel (95 percent), and nearly three-fourths were discharged at the grade of E-4 through E-6 (71 percent). At the time of survey administration, respondents had an average of 4.7 years of experience working for the private security industry, with a median of three years. Two-thirds of respondents (65.5 percent) stated that

they or their company worked on contract for the US government, while 56 (25.1 percent) stated their company worked for an international organization. About one-quarter of respondents (23.7 percent) had less than two years of private security work experience, 44.9 percent had worked two to five years, 23.7 percent five to ten years, and 7.7 percent had worked for more than ten years in the private security sector. Almost one-third of respondents (69 or 30.9 percent) reported that their job required them to “engage in actual fighting/security detail or security protection,” and more than three-quarters (171 or 76.7 percent) reported providing advisory and training services (multiple responses were possible to this question).

### *The Results*

To determine mutual and self-perceptions of officers and contractors, we focused our analysis on the motivations individuals had for joining private security firms and how they perceived their professional status and that of the military. Similarly, we asked the military officers for individual views of their status and their attitudes toward civilian contractors. Respondents in the CivPol sample were asked to indicate in order of priority motivations for seeking employment with a security firm from a set of nine predetermined choices (see Figure 1).

Motivators	Very Important	Important	Less/ Not Important
To face and meet new challenges.	74.9	20.8	4.3
To help others.	64.6	24.1	11.3
To feel like my work makes a difference.	38.0	37.1	24.9
To serve my country.	31.3	34.1	34.6
To make more money than in my previous job.	25.2	44.1	30.6
For personal growth.	22.0	33.9	44.0
To seek adventure and excitement.	19.1	35.4	45.5
To improve my chances of finding a better job.	13.1	36.7	50.2
To travel and visit new places.	11.3	32.1	56.6

Figure 1. Motivators for Seeking Employment in the Security Sector (in percent)

For the purpose of this analysis, we aggregated responses and classified a respondent's top three choices as "very important," choices four to six as "important," and the last three choices as "less or not important." The results indicate that by far the most-cited reasons for working in the security sector were to "face and meet new challenges" (74.9 percent) and to "help others" (64.6 percent). About one-third of respondents hoped that their work would make a difference (38 percent) and saw their contractor service as a way to serve their country (31.3 percent). In contrast to expectations raised in part by media reporting about the security industry, only one-quarter (25.2 percent) of respondents indicated that they were motivated to "make more money than in their previous job." These results show that neither profit nor selfless service to the nation is the primary motivator of civilian contractors.

These findings are consistent with other recent research on the motivations of security contractors. Jeremy Scahill, author of a book on Blackwater, also found that signing on with the security industry was not all about the pay. Contracting, he concluded, offered "a chance for many combat enthusiasts, retired from the service and stuck in the ennui of everyday existence, to return to their glory days on the battlefield under the banner of the international fight against terrorism."<sup>39</sup> A former Navy SEAL explained, "It's what you do. Say you spent 20 years doing things like riding high-speed boats and jumping out of airplanes. Now, all of a sudden, you're selling insurance. It's tough." For a 55-year-old police officer, the decision to sign on with Blackwater meant "the last chance in my life to do something exciting."<sup>40</sup>

Figure 2 shows the responses of participants in both segments of the survey to a series of statements with which they indicated their level of agreement or disagreement. We began our analysis with an assessment of respondents' perception regarding the exclusivity of the military's roles and functions by asking whether "certain functions performed by military personnel" could, in principle, not "be performed by a civilian contractor." This question was designed to tap their judgment of the boundaries of the military profession as well as its permeability: Are there no tasks or functions that are inherently military in nature and must be performed by uniformed and professional agents of the state? Unsurprisingly, almost nine-in-ten officers (88.8 percent) disagreed with this statement, indicating an overwhelming view that military professionals possess exclusive expertise that cannot be substituted through outsourcing. By contrast, fewer than two-thirds (65.9 percent) of contractors believed that the fulfillment of military functions was the exclusive prerogative of state soldiers.

Statement	CivPol Sample (N = 223)		Officer Sample (N = 160)	
	% Agree	% Disagree	% Agree	% Disagree
There are no functions performed by military personnel that, in principle, cannot be performed by a civilian contractor.	27.4	65.9	8.8	88.8
There are certain functions performed by military personnel that should never be performed by a civilian contractor.	78.0	13.9	95.6	3.8
Civilian contractors do their jobs more effectively than uniformed personnel could.	20.2	49.3	3.1	76.3
Civilian contractors performing in combat roles should be regarded as military professionals.	51.4	26.1	32.3	47.5
Civilian contractors employed by the enemy in a combat zone should be regarded as unlawful combatants.	39.2	41.9	36.3	45.6
The use of civilian contractors in combat roles is compatible with military ethos.	46.0	26.6	15.0	61.9
Civilian contractors performing in combat support roles should be regarded as military professionals.	51.1	27.8	N/A	N/A
Civilian contractors deployed abroad should be protected by the same international treaties as the armed forces.	89.7	4.5	N/A	N/A

Figure 2. Perceptions of Professional Status

Asking the obverse, “that certain functions performed by military personnel should never be performed by a civilian contractor,” confirmed those views, particularly with respect to the professional self-conception of officers. Nearly all officers (95.6 percent) agreed with this statement, but so also did more than three-quarters (78 percent) of contractors. Thus, a great majority in both samples agreed that there are core functions that should only be performed by uniformed military personnel. For the officer sample, we probed a little further using an open-ended question to elicit the specific functions that officers believed should not be performed by civilian contractors. Of those officers who responded to this question (N = 87), the majority (58) were concerned primarily with use-of-force issues, particularly combat. As one officer put it, “The exercise of war violence should never be done by civilians. This delegitimizes the role of organized militaries, lowering us to the same shadowy practices we seek to eradicate by fighting terrorists.” Almost as if to support this point, another wrote, “Any function that involves direct contact with the local population in combat in support of a military mission should never be contracted out unless the contractors become sub-

ject to [the Uniform Code of Military Justice]. Seen too many contractors get away with killing or beating civilians.” Another eight officers indicated that civilian contractors should not be permitted in a combat zone, or “outside the wire.” Overall, three-fourths of those officers who responded to this question (66 out of 87) suggested that combat, the core competency of the military profession, is no place for civilians. Other exclusive functions mentioned included command of military forces, control of nuclear weapons, and combat search and rescue.

Given officers’ perception of security contractors, it is surprising that one-third (32.3 percent) thought that “civilian contractors performing in combat roles should be regarded as military professionals.” This question directly addressed whether these officers believed possessing the knowledge and ability to engage in combat is sufficient to deem a person a military professional. Survey results indicate that almost half of officers (47.5 percent) believe that direct employment as part of the state’s uniformed military services was a necessary condition to be considered a military professional, while one-fifth were ambivalent. This margin indicates a functional acceptance of contractors in a combat role. By contrast, a slight majority of contractors felt that contractors performing combat (51.4 percent) or combat support duties (51.1 percent) should be regarded as military professionals. Slightly more than one-quarter (26.1 percent) disagreed with respect to combat duties. It is clear that for this group function is more important than other aspects in determining professional status.

Stretching the issue of professional boundaries a bit further, we asked about the Bush Administration’s policy that defined individuals who are not members of a state-sponsored military but engage in combat against American forces as “unlawful combatants.”<sup>41</sup> On the face of it, civilians who engage in combat on behalf of a private employer, such as security contractors, would meet the definition of an unlawful combatant. Consequently, we asked respondents whether they thought “civilian contractors employed by the enemy in a combat zone should be regarded as unlawful combatants.” Respondents in both samples seemed split in their opinion on this issue. Forty percent of contractors agreed (39.2 percent) or disagreed (41.9 percent), while more than one-third of officers (36.3 percent) agreed and almost half (45.2 percent) disagreed; these differences were not statistically significant. The fact that there was no clear consensus among respondents in our samples on the question of whether contractors in combat roles are “unlawful combatants” may be a result of the application of an ambiguous and widely unpopular legal term to a range of emerging and increasingly important international actors. The divided nature of responses to this statement indicates the need to further codify the booming private

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security industry and to resolve the continuing ambiguity with respect to the international legal status of individual contractors and the industry as a whole. The contractors would welcome further inclusion into formal agreements. Nine-in-ten (89.7 percent) indicated that “civilian contractors should be protected by the same international treaties as the armed forces.”

In the aftermath of the September 2007 Blackwater shootings of 17 Iraqi civilians, formal mechanisms to regulate the industry and the behavior of individual contractors have tightened considerably, although none extend the desired protections of international law to contractors. The Departments of State and Defense increased their oversight and authority over armed security contractors in Iraq. In January 2009, the Iraqi government revoked the immunity of contractors with respect to local law, thus making it theoretically possible for Iraqi authorities to criminally prosecute security contractors for unlawful behavior. These developments indicate recognition of the need for change in the legal and political regulation of the industry.

Finally, the outsourcing of combat functions to the private sector cuts to the heart of military professionalism, calls into question what it means to be a soldier, and diffuses traditional notions of a warrior identity. To assess their view on the exclusivity of the military’s professional hallmark, namely the application of violence for national security purposes, we asked respondents in both samples whether they thought “the use of civilian contractors in combat roles is compatible with the military ethos.” While the majority of officers (61.9 percent) judged civilians in combat roles to be incompatible with the military ethos (only 15 percent judged them compatible), almost half of contractors (46 percent) thought their involvement in combat was compatible.

## ***Conclusion***

In light of the growing importance of private security contractors as contributing actors to peace and stability operations, we examined the military-contractor relationship in some detail. Specifically, we explored the motivations of individuals who become employees of private security firms, compared the attitudes of military officers to those of security contractors,

and examined how the two groups view each other, their roles, and professional status.

Overall, our findings suggest that the boundaries of the military profession are being challenged by the outsourcing of more and more functional tasks that had hitherto been performed by military personnel. Contracting out support functions in particular had somewhat stemmed the civilianization of the military<sup>42</sup> and allowed it to focus more on its core function, the management and application of violence in support of the political aims of the state. The use of civilian contractors as armed security guards, operational planners, and participants in raids by special operations forces,<sup>43</sup> however, suggests that the outsourcing trend now endangers the basic tenets of the military profession itself.

The results of our survey indicate that officers are well aware of this threat to their professional self-conception. Officers in the sample clearly delineated the functional boundaries of, and membership in, their profession, clearly judging that certain (military) functions can only be performed by military professionals. Yet, while most officers indicated that civilians in combat roles were incompatible with military ethos, they displayed both vehemence and ambivalence toward the professional status of contractors in such roles. Seventy-five percent indicated that civilians should not engage in combat, yet more than a quarter of officers defined civilian contractors performing combat roles as military professionals. Less than half (47.5 percent) rejected professional status for contractors. These mixed outcomes indicate that officers may place excessive emphasis on functional expertise as the primary definer of professional status. The survey results also show that officers' corporate identity may be as vulnerable to the challenges posed by private military companies as their jurisdiction.<sup>44</sup>

Our sample of civilian contractors indicates that this challenge will continue to be present: a majority judged that they should be regarded as military professionals. In addition, a large plurality of contractors felt their engagement in combat roles was compatible with military ethos even though a majority of them agreed with the officers that certain military functions should never be performed by a civilian contractor. These results highlight a desire for the development and recognition of a professional identity in the security industry. Given that armed contractors possess expertise in the application and management of organized violence, have acted as agents of the US government, and provide cost-effective solutions to problems within the traditional jurisdiction of the military profession, they may have a claim to status as military professionals. Indeed, a recent Defense Science Board report repeatedly characterized contractors as the "fifth force provider in addition to the four services,"<sup>45</sup> and military sociologists David Segal and



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Karin De Angelis have argued for a “broader . . . definition of who constitutes the profession” that would also include contractors.<sup>46</sup>

The fragmented nature of the industry, its multitude of firms, heterogeneous labor pool, and difficulties in forging a common corporate identity through coherent and consistent indoctrination, training, and educational experiences suggests, however, that armed contractors should at best be considered to be members of a semi-profession.<sup>47</sup> Incorporating contractors into the military profession would dilute its corporate identity, its dedication to a common good, its ability to control members’ entry, promotion, and exit, and would cripple the legitimacy of the armed forces as clearly demarcated and legal agents of the state.

Still, responses to the survey clearly indicate a sense of frustration among contractors regarding the existing lack of codification of the industry and, as a result, the lack of standardized professional norms guiding their behavior in the field. We found the majority of contractors not to be motivated primarily by financial gain. Instead, most were motivated by a desire to “face and meet new challenges” and to “help others.” Previous research on the attitudes of security contractors has found that many are highly committed to professional norms and ethical standards of democratic societies. The vast majority of contractors surveyed supported the ethical standards put forth by the industry’s trade organization, the International Peace Operations Association “Code of Conduct.”<sup>48</sup> These data points all indicate that continued professionalization of the industry is possible and should be encouraged, especially by the Department of Defense, security firms, and employees.

The results of our preliminary research using small and fairly homogeneous samples representing elite military officers and the private security industry indicate the need to more specifically define the operational and legal functions and responsibilities of the private security industry and to limit the outsourcing of core military functions to noncombat roles. Outsourcing support roles could enhance the professionalism of the US military, but the concept of armed contractors on the battlefield poses a strong challenge to the military’s professional identity and jurisdiction. This challenge and the judgments of our samples indicate that professional military education has to more effectively address the shape and requirements of the military profession, at least in the Air Force and likely across sister-service curricula

as well. We also recommend enhanced joint training to improve the cooperation between the military and the armed and unarmed private sector. Finally, future research should explore this relationship in greater detail and examine the merits and effectiveness of contractor-military cooperation in post-conflict contingencies.

## NOTES

1. James Glanz, "Contractors Outnumber U.S. Troops in Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, 2 September 2009, A10.

2. Doug Brooks, "Recipe for Success," *Journal of International Peace Operations*, 4 (September/October 2008), 6.

3. Glanz.

4. Samuel P. Huntington, "Power, Expertise, and the Military Profession," *Daedalus*, 92 (Fall 1963), 785.

5. More recently some have argued that the area of expertise for military professionals has expanded to include "human development," "political-cultural expert knowledge," and a "moral-ethical cluster." (Don M. Snider, "The U.S. Army as a Profession," in Don M. Snider and Lloyd J. Matthews, eds., *The Future of the Army Profession* [2d ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Custom Publishing, 2005, 12].)

6. "They belong to the officer corps in its capacity as an administrative organization of the state, but not in its capacity as a professional body." (Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* [Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1957], 12.)

7. Government Accountability Office, *Rebuilding Iraq: Actions Needed to Improve Use of Private Security Providers* (Washington: Government Accountability Office, July 2005), <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05737.pdf>; Jennifer K. Elsea and Nina M. Searfino, *Private Security Contractors in Iraq: Background, Legal Status, and Other Issues* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, updated 21 June 2007), <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/88030.pdf>; **Human Rights First**, *Private Security Contractors at War: Ending the Culture of Impunity* (New York: Human Rights First, 2008), <http://www.humanrightsfirst.info/pdf/08115-usls-psc-final.pdf>.

8. These figures refer only to individuals employed by non-Iraqi security companies. See Congressional Budget Office, "Contractors' Support of U.S. Operations in Iraq" (Washington: Congressional Budget Office, August 2008), <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/96xx/doc9688/08-12-IraqContractors.pdf>.

9. Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *Agencies Need Improved Financial Data Reporting for Private Security Contractors* (Arlington, Va.: Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, 30 October 2008), <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA489037&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>.

10. Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988).

11. Andrew Abbott, "The Army and the Theory of Professions," in Lloyd J. Matthews, ed., *The Future of the Army Profession* (New York: McGraw-Hill Primis Custom Publishing, 2002), 525-27.

12. P. W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2003), 44-48.

13. *Ibid.*, 91-100.

14. Volker Franke and Marc von Boemcken, *Attitudes, Values, and Professional Self-Conceptions of Private Security Contractors in Iraq: An Exploratory Study* (Bonn, Germany: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2009), 7-9.

15. Huntington argued that neither reservists nor enlisted personnel are professionals, while Gwyn Harries-Jenkins disagreed. See Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 17-18 and Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, "The Concept of Military Professionalism," *Defense Analysis*, 6 (June 1990), 121-22.

16. Jennifer K. Elsea, Moshe Schwartz, and Kennon H. Nakamura, *Private Security Contractors in Iraq: Background, Legal Status, and Other Issues* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, updated 29 September 2008), 14, note 52.

17. Erik D. Prince, "How Blackwater Serves America," *The Wall Street Journal*, 16 December 2008, A23.

18. In 2008, only the 25 largest defense budgets surpassed \$6 billion, and 42 surpassed \$3 billion. See Christopher Hellman and Travis Sharp, "The FY 2009 Pentagon Spending Request-Global Military Spending" (Washington: The Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation, 22 February 2008), [http://www.armscontrol-center.org/policy/securityspending/articles/fy09\\_dod\\_request\\_global/](http://www.armscontrol-center.org/policy/securityspending/articles/fy09_dod_request_global/).

19. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 15.
20. Charles C. Moskos, Jr., "From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization," *Armed Forces and Society*, 4 (Fall 1977), 43.
21. Ibid., 42-43.
22. Singer, 41.
23. Volker Franke, "The Emperor Needs New Clothes: Securitizing Threats in the Twenty-first Century," *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 9 (December 2002), 1-20.
24. Vasemaca Rarabici, "Iraq: Death is a Price of Blood Money," *Fiji Times*, 2 May 2006, <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=13525>.
25. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 14. This notion of altruistic service has been challenged by many sociologists, particularly Abbott, *The System of Professions* and Steven Brint, *In an Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994).
26. Deborah D. Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), 47-49.
27. Harries-Jenkins, 127.
28. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 14.
29. Huntington, "Power, Expertise, and the Military Profession," 793-97; Paul Gronke and Peter D. Feaver, "Uncertain Confidence: Civilian and Military Attitudes about Civil-Military Relations," in Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 132-35.
30. Singer, 206-15.
31. John Hackett, *The Profession of Arms* (London: Times Publishing Co., 1963), 63.
32. Elsea, Schwartz, and Nakamura, 3.
33. Franke and Boemcken, 18-19.
34. Peter D. Feaver, Richard H. Kohn, and Lindsay P. Cohn, "The Gap between Military and Civilian in the United States in Perspective," in Feaver and Kohn, 6-7.
35. Sister service institutions were approached but did not grant access to their students.
36. Out of a population of 605, resulting in a 26.4 percent response rate. Service representation in the sample compared to the Air University student population is as follows: Air Force (78.75 percent vs. 78.18 percent), Army (10.625 percent vs. 11.5 percent), Navy (7.5 percent vs. 7.6 percent), Marine Corps (1.25 percent vs. 2.6 percent).
37. Details about the CivPol Alumni Association are available at <http://www.civpol-alumni.org>.
38. A 25 percent response rate.
39. Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* (New York: Nation Books, 2007), 146.
40. Ibid.
41. "Military Commissions Act of 2006," 10 U.S.C. 948a, Public Law 109-366, 17 October 2006.
42. Richard K. Betts, "Are Civil-Military Relations Still a Problem?" in Suzanne C. Nielsen and Don M. Snider, eds., *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2009), 26.
43. James Risen and Mark Mazzetti, "Blackwater Guards Tied to Secret C.I.A. Raids," *The New York Times*, 11 December 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/11/us/politics/11blackwater.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/11/us/politics/11blackwater.html?_r=1), A1.
44. It has been suggested that this may be an artifact of the over-representation of Air Force officers in the sample. A follow-on study with a population heavy in US Army, Navy, and Marine Corps officers would be necessary to confirm or falsify the veracity of this conclusion.
45. *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Institutionalizing Stability Operations within DoD* (Washington: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, September 2005), 14, 31, 33, 38, and 49.
46. David R. Segal and Karin De Angelis, "Changing Conceptions of the Military as a Profession," in Nielsen and Snider, 212.
47. A semi-profession is one that "replace[s] theoretical study of a field of learning [with] the acquisition of precise technical skill." (Albert J. Reiss, Jr., "Occupational Mobility of Professional Workers," *American Sociological Review*, 20 [December 1955], 693.)
48. See Franke and Boemcken, and "Code of Conduct 12-English," International Peace Operations Association, <http://www.ipoworld.org/eng/codeofconduct/87-codecodeofconductv12enghtml.html>.